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Editorial

Growing anti-Arroyo movement within the AFP-PNP

The Arroyo regime and the fascist AFP and PNP leadership pounced on the capture of Capt. Nicanor Faeldon in the last week of January to boast about the armed forces' consistently strong support for the chain of command and how anti-Arroyo groups in contrast enjoy such puny support among police and military forces. Faeldon was captured more than a month after he escaped detention in mid-December 2005.

Despite Faeldon's recapture, unrest and discontent continue to grow in depth and breadth within the AFP and PNP. The movement to which Faeldon belongs persists despite his capture because the basis for its existence and that of similar other groups in the military and police remains.

Faeldon's escape was followed by that of four other junior officers who likewise participated in the Oakwood protest. Declaring that they would carry on the fight, they likewise called on the people to oust the Arroyo regime.

Many other officers and soldiers



helped in their escape and gave them refuge outside prison. Thus, the top generals are still unable to pinpoint their whereabouts. The escapees immediately linked up with their comrades in arms who have continued to organize among the military and police and are preparing to repudiate and openly oppose the regime.

All these are indications of the growing number of like-minded soldiers who have seen the light, are

extremely disgruntled and thoroughly despise the illegitimate and rotten ruling regime and are ready to take action to oust it.

The spirit of the "Oakwood protest"—where over 300 soldiers and junior officers rose up against the Arroyo clique and its AFP generals whose corruption and fascism they could no longer stomach—continues to spread within the AFP and PNP.

In a statement he left behind

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when he escaped in December, Faeldon said that Arroyo and her underlings' very actions since the Oakwood protest and the other anomalies uncovered in the military, police and civil bureaucracy prove the correctness of their uprising.

The bases for the serious grievances held by soldiers and policemen are as strong as ever—and the most glaring of them is corruption among the AFP and PNP's highest ranking officers. It is corruption that lies at the roots of much of the hardships and oppression suffered by the rank and file. One of the more common anomalies is to deliberately delay the salaries of ordinary soldiers and policemen so corrupt officers could use the funds for gambling or as investment capital. Wounded and sick soldiers are likewise given expired medications in military hospitals. Hovels within military camps that are home to the families of the rank and file are demolished even as generals live in the comfort of huge mansions. Soldiers' pension funds sourced from deductions from their already meager salaries are stolen by generals who use them as personal funds

and squander them. Millions of pesos worth of military contracts are falsified through the "conversion" system where top generals pocket funds in their entirety, as what the late Capt. Rene Jarque had exposed. Generals likewise hatch up ghost military operations, ordering soldiers to advance without any clear or real targets just so those in the high command could lay their hands on the operational funds.

The Arroyo regime and its fascist generals also use the soldiers and the police as instruments in suppressing the people's legitimate struggles. They are molded into murderers who inflict violence on people who, like them, are impoverished, all to defend an unjust social order. Their minds are poisoned to make them believe that the enemy is the struggling people, instead of the repressive Arroyo regime, its imperialist master and the fascist generals in the AFP and PNP.

It is but just for them to expose and oppose corruption in the military bureaucracy and assert the rights of the junior officers and rank and file who have been deceived, used and oppressed. We

must encourage all oppressed and exploited elements within the AFP and PNP to close ranks and launch various protest actions to advance their own legitimate interests and resist their deception, exploitation and oppression.

Nonetheless, these elements realize full well that they are in the belly of the beast and that launching acts of protest and resistance from within the fascist state is no easy task. In the face of the intense scrutiny, surveillance and repression with which the Arroyo regime and its fascist officials will surely respond, soldiers and policemen must be very careful and creative in conducting organizing work, in manifesting their sentiments and in taking action. The AFP and PNP's anti-communist history and the fascist indoctrination and orientation that have been deeply inculcated by US imperialism and the fascist ruling state within the military and police organization make it necessary for enlightened and progressive soldiers and policemen to exercise a certain level of autonomy and caution in conducting organizing work within the AFP and PNP. It is likewise necessary and desirable if they were to link up, cooperate and coordinate with, patriotic and democratic forces that also advance the interests and rights of the majority, support the legitimate struggles of soldiers and policemen and unite with them in struggling for a common cause. This may be done whenever conditions allow it or when it is possible to use creative means openly or clandestinely.

It has likewise dawned on enlightened soldiers and policemen that their aspirations for basic reforms within the AFP, PNP and Philippine society in general can



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NPA releases POW as a goodwill gesture to anti-Arroyo soldiers

The New People's Army (NPA) released its prisoner of war (POW) Philippine Air Force Maj. Neptune Elequin on February 3 in a coastal area in Central Luzon. Major Elequin was captured by the NPA on July 2, 2005 in Floridablanca, Pampanga.

The CPP and the National Democratic Front (NDF) decided to release Major Elequin as a humanitarian gesture, in response to pleas from his family and sympathizers and despite the Arroyo regime's complete indifference to his plight.

Elequin's release is likewise a gesture of goodwill and an offer of friendship and cooperation from the CPP, NPA and the entire revolutionary movement to the growing ranks of disgruntled and enlightened military and police forces that stand ready to fight the regime.

Major Elequin is but one of the many AFP officers the Arroyo regime has abandoned. For the past seven months, Arroyo consistently refused to negotiate for Elequin's orderly release and order a suspension of offensive military and police operations.

Major Elequin was interviewed by an independent attorney and underwent a medical checkup before he was released to ascertain that he was treated well as a prisoner of war

by the NPA.

The attorney explained the content of the Order of Release signed by NDF negotiating panel chair Luis Jalandoni, who was authorized to sign such orders. The NPA custodial unit received the order.

Major Elequin was turned over to Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and Bishop Solito Tuquero of the United Methodist Church. Senator Biazon, in particular, was chosen because he was an acceptable personality representing the interests of disadvantaged officers and rank and file from the AFP and PNP; and also because he was in favor of continuing the peace negotiations in a bid to address and resolve the basic social problems that lie at the root of the raging civil war in the Philippines.

The Arroyo regime, on the other hand, continues to paralyze and sabotage the peace talks instead of addressing and resolving the roots of civil war in the country. Arroyo's fascist generals have even intensified

the regime's terrorist war and stepped up other violations of the people's human rights.

At the formal release ceremony, the CPP representative condemned relentless military operations, especially in Central Luzon. He pointed out that at least 47 activists have been killed in the region by the Arroyo regime's death squads. The CPP also condemned the military for ordering its helicopter gunships to strafe and fire rockets into Sta. Ignacia, Tarlac on January 31, killing many civilians. The Party likewise assailed the massacre by military men of five members of a family in San Ildefonso, Bulacan suspected of sympathizing with the revolutionary movement.

After the ceremony, Senator Biazon and the leading Communist Party cadre in the area held serious discussions on the present political situation, the brewing crisis besetting the ruling clique, the transitional government that may replace the soon-to-be-ousted Arroyo regime, and the common desire to pursue peace negotiations between the GRP and the NDF.

AB

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never be realized for as long as the corrupt, puppet and fascist Arroyo regime remains in power. The ouster of the ruling regime and its corrupt generals is a necessary first step in the longterm advance of both their and the people's welfare and interests. They have pinned their hopes on a new government that genuinely cares for the people.

In the face of widespread unrest in the AFP and PNP and growing coup threats from disgruntled mili-

tary and police forces, Arroyo has been frantically trying to win them over by ordering the release of huge funds for soldiers' housing and benefits for the police.

This is all too late for Arroyo. The AFP-PNP rank and file waited long for her to make good on her promise in 2001 to raise their salaries, a promise that has turned out to be an empty one. Today, the soldiers and policemen know that the much-vaunted housing program is yet another deception.

Like ordinary Filipinos, the ma-

jority of soldiers and policemen are sick and tired of the lies and deception dished out by the bogus president enthroned in Malacañang. More and more of them are ready to withdraw their support, turn the state's armed forces against the much hated regime and join the people's struggle.

Arroyo will wake up one day to find the so-called unbreakable chain of command torn asunder, and the downtrodden soldiers and police forces risen with the people.

AB

The tottering Arroyo regime

The Arroyo regime is relentless in its efforts to deodorize itself and deceive the people, to parry off attacks, and to engineer devious schemes and use government resources to the hilt to continue to dominate Congress and local governments. It is determinedly pushing charter change (cha-cha) to entice US support and derail the Oust Arroyo Movement. It uses a mailed fist policy against mass protests and armed threats from the military and the police. Arroyo is using everything imaginable to remain in power until 2010 or even beyond.

Restive military. In concert with the buildup in the mass movement's strength and momentum, a growing number of opposition forces and even disgruntled elements within the AFP and PNP are moving to fast-track the military component of the anti-Arroyo resistance.

There are ever growing rifts and widespread unrest within the government's armed forces. Movements composed of anti-Arroyo soldiers ready to wage resistance continue to gain strength. These organizations have gained more determination and initiative to expand, step up their opposition to the regime, and unite with the people. The regime all too keenly feels the moves of various anti-Arroyo groups within the AFP and PNP, and is aware of the strong support they enjoy from the military, police and even from the people, and the stronger ties that have been forged not only among groups within the military but also between them and the democratic and progressive anti-Arroyo organizations.

The growing restiveness and rebelliousness among the ranks of the

military and police is a fine thing. Because of this, we have gained friends and allies among the military and police, and the enemy forces are divided and disintegrating.

Just this January, rumors were rife that a coup would be launched by anti-Arroyo forces within the AFP and PNP. The series of escapes of junior officers from military prisons had likewise alarmed the regime. The escaped officers and even those who remain in detention but have not wavered in their opposition to the much-detested regime continue to enjoy high prestige not just among the military but even among the people.

These incontrovertible facts have compelled Arroyo and her followers in the AFP to admit that indeed, a coup d'état was a distinct possibility. Malacañang and the AFP and PNP leadership repeatedly placed the military and police on red alert and carried out loyalty checks among their ranks. They imposed increasingly repressive measures to pressure anti-Arroyo soldiers and officers, and removed from their posts everyone they suspected of abetting the series of escapes of Magdalo soldiers in December and January. Five soldiers were arrested and detained because of their links with the Magdalo group. A shoot-to-kill order has been issued against the four escapees who had declared their continued opposition to Arroyo. The regime threatened to fight "fire with fire" should anti-Arroyo soldiers and police forces initiate any armed actions. Arroyo likewise replaced everyone whose loyalties were questionable, booting out no less than the chief of the Presidential Security Group Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit.

Long before this, Arroyo had already bribed with high positions the

most loyal generals who colluded with her in perpetrating big-time corruption and massive fraud in the last elections—Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon who is next in line as AFP chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon who has been appointed chief of the AFP Southern Command, and Rear Adm. Tirso Danga who has been designated chief of the AFP Western Command.

The broadest ever anti-Arroyo united front. The legal opposition and various mass organizations gathered on January 31 to form a broad alliance that unified and provided renewed impetus to the Oust Arroyo Movement. Among those who gathered that day were representatives of the United Opposition (UNO), the Black and White Movement, Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP), Bangon Pilipinas, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Bayan Muna, Be Not Afraid, Bukluran para sa Katotohanan, Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya, La Liga Filipina, Sanlakas-Laban ng Masa, FPJ for President Movement, Solidarity Movement and the Lahat na Po Movement. The gathering reflected the broadest unity ever within the anti-Arroyo movement. Various groups in the AFP and PNP, both active and dormant, likewise supported these efforts. The establishment of the latest united front formation put the lie to the Arroyo camp's mocking assertion that the opposition could not possibly succeed in any action against the regime because of its fractiousness.

The broad anti-Arroyo front assailed the breakdown of the country's political processes and institutions due to the Arroyo regime's dirty tactics and maneuvers and said

it would put emphasis on the intensification of massive protest actions to oust Arroyo from power.

The alliance likewise condemned Arroyo's brutal and fascist measures against leaders from the democratic sectors. It pledged support for the actions of junior officers of the AFP which it cited as the only group within the reactionary army capable of succeeding against the Arroyo regime. It expressed solidarity with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for having issued a more forthright and sharply militant statement (*see related item*).

In another indication of firmer unity among the various opposition forces, former president Corazon Aquino visited former president Joseph Estrada at the San Juan Medical Center where Estrada was recuperating from an eye operation. Aquino came with Senate President Franklin Drilon, Susan Roces, Makati Mayor and UNO chair Jejomar Binay and other oppositionists. It was the first time Aquino and Estrada, formerly bitter enemies, had a meeting since the 2001 people's uprising at EDSA.

More militant CBCP. The CBCP had always had a significant number of members opposed to Arroyo's continued stay in power. But it was only lately that the CBCP came out with a clearer and sharper position against the Arroyo regime. This, after Archbishop Angel Lagdameo of Jaro, Iloilo replaced the more conservative Archbishop Fernando Cappalla of Davao City as CBCP president.

In its pastoral letter issued January 29, the CBCP strongly condemned the Arroyo regime's continuing lies and persistent efforts to cover up the truth behind the "Hello, Garci" tapes. It likewise assailed the regime's "Cha-Cha" (Charter

Change) and "No-El" (No Elections) schemes.

The CBCP also expressed its dismay over Congress' decision on January 25 to terminate its investigation into the tapes. It took particular exception to the regime's machinations to circumvent, obstruct and distort legally constituted processes.

Prior to this, Arroyo had failed to secure the Council of State's approval for her "No-El" plan, despite the fact that the majority of those who met at the Council summit were Malacañang allies. Palace spokespersons claimed that the ruling party emerged completely united after the meeting. Former president Fidel Ramos, however, contradicted Malacañang's claims and instead warned that should the "No-El" scheme push through, it would precipitate a "national disaster." The Arroyo regime has since been forced to withdraw its "No-El" plan, and Congress eventually junked all pending measures calling for the postponement of the 2007 elections.

Cha-Cha at all cost. If and when the polls do materialize, Arroyo will move heaven and earth to make sure that they will be elections for a new parliament—which could only be possible if charter change occurs before year's end. It is Arroyo's passport to extending her stay in power till 2010 or beyond.

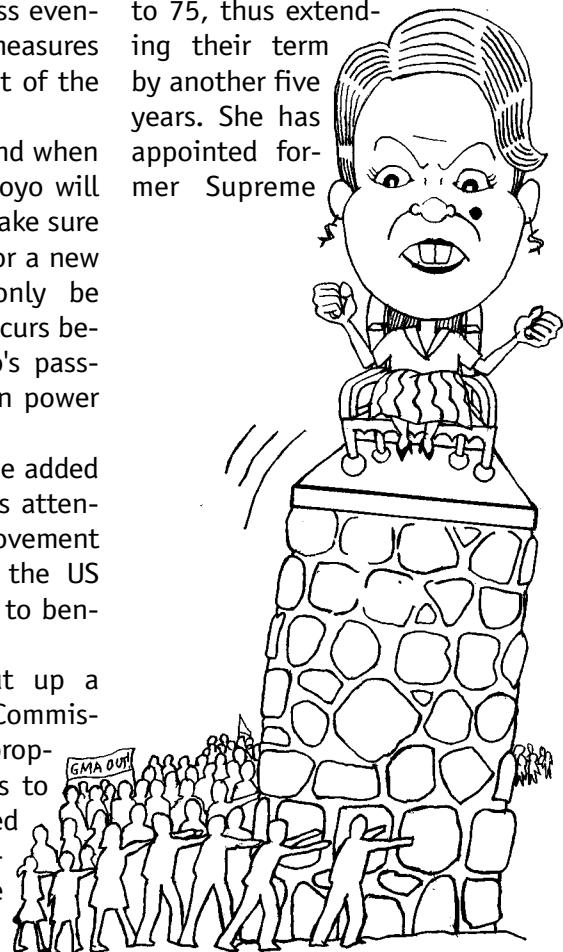
Cha-cha moreover has the added role of diverting the people's attention, derailing the ouster movement and enticing support from the US and opportunists who stand to benefit from it.

Arroyo has likewise put up a "Charter Change Advocacy Commission" that would allegedly propagate Cha-Cha-related issues to the public. She has directed her allies in the Congressional majority to railroad the commission's establishment.

The commission would have a ₱5 million budget and a lifespan of eight months. In the face of certain opposition from legal experts and a hostile Senate majority, Arroyo has been pushing for the Congress and Senate to sit jointly as a constituent assembly where the 2/3 votes from her allies in Congress would drown out any opposition from the senators.

Arroyo has also launched a so-called "People's Initiative" as a third option to achieve charter change. The scheme, which involves the procurement of at least five million votes from the public to ratify amendments to the constitution would effectively smother Senate resistance.

As an added incentive to her allies among the current Supreme Court justices, Arroyo has likewise proposed the inclusion of provisions raising their retirement age from 70 to 75, thus extending their term by another five years. She has appointed former Supreme



Court Justice Hilarion Davide to head an electoral reforms body to ride on his prestige and secure his continued support for the regime.

Cabinet reshuffle. Arroyo is currently in the middle of a major Cabinet reshuffle to strengthen her hand in using governmental power, especially that of the military and police and local governments and her ability to utilize huge public funds.

Pinning her hopes on Mike Defensor's uncanny ability to distort all logic and hoodwink the public,

she has appointed him Chief of Staff of Malacañang concurrent with his role as head of the Palace's communications department. Ronaldo Puno, on the other hand, has been whisked out of Congress to head the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) due to his expertise in perpetrating electoral fraud, manipulating the mass media, forming secret armies and carrying out dirty tricks since the time of the Marcos dictatorship. Arroyo has also come to trust and rely on Puno more than current DILG chief,

Gen. Angelo Reyes, who, as a consolation prize, has been transferred to the post vacated by Defensor at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya, meanwhile, has been appointed secretary of the Department of Budget and Management. Arroyo can look forward to working more confidently with Andaya in diverting government funds than Romulo Neri, who has been sent back to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). AB

Abominable cases of corruption

The latest Senate investigations continue to uncover the gravity and extent to which Arroyo and her cronies anomalously used ₱2.8 billion in fertilizer funds administered by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in 2004. The funds include ₱728 million for the DA's Farm Input and Implements Program and ₱544 million for the Department of Agrarian Reform's (DAR) hybrid rice propagation.

Commission on Audit documents reveal that 100 congressmen, 53 governors and 26 mayors received from ₱3 million to ₱10 million each from the fertilizer funds a few days before the 2004 elections.

DAR Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante, a known operator for the Arroyo family, supervised the release of funds from DAR and the distribution of commissions to the congressmen and local officials. Bolante used Feshan Philippines Inc., a company he set up to get an exclusive contract to supply cheap fertilizer at highly inflated prices.

It was a certain Maritess Aytona who served as Feshan's dummy owner and manager, dealt with officials and distributed their commissions. Malacañang assigned Antipolo congressman Jimmy Paule, an uncle of

newly appointed DILG secretary Ronaldo Puno to monitor the company and ensure that Arroyo's interests were served in its operations and transactions. Another Feshan employee, Jose Barredo Jr. testified before the Senate that he worked for the company as a runner in Aytona's transactions with local officials.

Barredo moreover revealed during the Senate probe that virtually all the fertilizer funds were not used to buy fertilizer. Congressmen, mayors and other local officials usually pocketed huge commissions from Feshan's transactions with private companies.

Sorsogon provincial board member Rebecca Aquino, who also testified at the Senate, corroborated Barredo's testimony. Data from the Commission on Audit's report likewise supported Aquino's testimony that the fertilizer bought by congressmen, local governments and NGOs from Feshan were enormously overpriced.

The Senate inquiry also revealed that ₱544 million in ill-gotten wealth recovered from the Marcoses was likewise used for the anomalous Ginintuang Masaganang Ani rice hybrid program, agricultural equipment and ghost farm-to-market road

projects. DAR Usec. Belinda Gonzales confirmed in January that Bolante directly disbursed ₱100 million from this fund to the regime's most loyal allies for vote-buying. Three Arroyo partymates from Cebu got ₱3 million each for the "rice hybrid program" despite the fact that rice is not cultivated in their districts. Sixty percent of the funds were distributed on May 3, 2004, and the rest after the elections. These funds are a drop in the bucket compared to the vastly bigger quantities of government funds Arroyo used in her election campaign.

Marcos ill-gotten wealth in escrow nearly gone. Officials of the Arroyo regime admitted in January that there is little left of ₱35 billion of ill-gotten wealth recovered from Marcoses two years after the amount was transferred to a Philippine bank to be held in escrow.

A huge portion—₱27 billion—was allotted for projects under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Only ₱8 billion was set aside as indemnity for victims of human rights violations under the Marcos dictatorship (al-

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though Sen. Joker Arroyo asserts that the amount should be ₱10 billion). Budget Secretary Romulo Neri confirmed in a Senate hearing that the bulk of this amount had already been spent, and that the ₱5 billion balance had already been earmarked for various DAR programs.

Senate investigations revealed that Arroyo actually used the bulk of the ₱27 billion supposedly for CARP implementation for her 2004 election campaign. The funds were surreptitiously coursing through various anomalous projects supervised by Arroyo's operators in the DA, DAR, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). In the guise of such schemes and projects as the "fertilizer fund", "rice hybrid program" and "farm-to-market roads," among others, Arroyo directly doled out funds to local officials and her allies in Congress.

The Senate investigation also focused on ₱544 million of this fund allotted to the anomalous Ginin-

tuang Masangang Ani rice hybrid program which was released in its entirety on May 3, a week before the elections. Most of those who received this fund were congressmen and local officials from Arroyo's party.

The Senate inquiry referred to a study conducted by the Rice Watch and Action Network (R1) that details how funds were anomalously utilized under the rice hybrid program. In one instance, ₱216 million was used to support the production of rice seeds for 1,969.77 hectares of land—which leads to the incredible conclusion that ₱109,657 was spent for rice seeds per hectare! In another instance, ₱178 million was allegedly spent to distribute rice seeds for 453,333 hectares planted to rice. DA reports, however, reveal that it was able to distribute seeds for 208,342 hectares only.

Secret deal with Danding. Meanwhile, the Presidential Commission on Good Government

(PCGG) is keeping its mouth shut on secret negotiations between Malacañang and Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco on the ownership of the coco levy funds and stocks in 14 companies bought with these funds. The funds from the levy imposed by Marcos on coconut farmers during martial law were deposited in a Cojuangco-owned bank and used by Danding to expand his holdings.

Cojuangco's biggest acquisition using these funds is San Miguel Corporation (SMC) where he controls 27% of the stocks. The government currently holds another 20% of SMC shares bought with coco levy funds.

Gloria Arroyo has directly ordered PCGG chair Camilo Sabio to negotiate a secret deal with Cojuangco that would secure the latter's ownership of the 27% he now holds and enable him to take possession of the other 20% for a mere ₱50 billion, all in exchange for Cojuangco's support for Arroyo's political schemes. **AB**

Strong opposition to large-scale mining

A side from opposing Arroyo's "no election" and "charter change" schemes, the CBCP is also up in arms against the Mining Act of 1995 and the regime's program to entice large foreign mining companies into the country.

The CBCP fears that proposed changes to the Constitution would give way to the widespread plunder of the national patrimony and violate national sovereignty, to the detriment of the people.

The CBCP also condemned the oppression of national minorities by large foreign mining corporations that invariably violate their right to self-determination and destroy their indigenous culture. The CBCP pointed out that national minorities who suffer various hardships upon the entry of large foreign mining com-

panies are at the forefront of the struggle against the Mining Act.

With the government armed forces providing security and serving as instruments of repression against residents opposed to operations of big foreign mining firms, affected areas are constantly militarized, leading to numerous human rights violations.

The CBCP also decried the severe environmental destruction and health hazards caused by large scale mining due to the wanton disposal of mine tailings in rivers and seas. Cases of environmental ruin and the devastation of people's livelihoods are abundant—massive flooding in Mindoro and poisoned rivers in Marinduque and Zamboanga del Sur, to name a few. They give the lie to the validity of the Arroyo regime's



so-called programs for "sustainable mining."

The CBCP added that the Arroyo regime's mining revitalization program is sure to worsen the people's

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plight. Already, the regime has opened 17 critical biodiversity areas, 35 national conservation priority areas and 32 national integrated protected areas to exploitation by foreign companies.

The CBCP called on the Arroyo regime to immediately rescind all approved mining licenses and stop the issuance of new ones. The militant fisherfolk group PAMALAKAYA has also questioned the release by Michael Defensor of 4,968 environmental clearance certificates (ECC) in 2005 when he was secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and his approval of Administrative Order 24 which opened all coastal areas nationwide to foreign investors.

Mass protests in Mindoro

Coinciding with the CBCP's statement of condemnation, thousands trooped to the streets to assail large-scale mining in the country. About 10,000 people joined a caravan January 30 in Oriental Mindoro to oppose the operations of Aglubang Mining Corporation, which is owned by Crew Gold Mining of Canada. It was the first time Mindoreños united in massive protest against large-scale mining in the island. The protest action was led by Alyansa Laban sa Mina (ALAMIN) and supported by the local government of Oriental Mindoro and the Apostolic Vicariate of Calapan. It was attended by peasants, Mangyan tribespeople, clergy, civic organizations, student groups and two congressmen. To emphasize their opposition to the Mining Act of 1995, rallyists read aloud an ordinance passed by the Oriental Mindoro provincial board on January 28, 2002 banning large-scale mining in the island for the next 25 years.

The caravan joined by 500 vehicles started at 7:00 a.m. in Calapan

City and passed through the towns of Naujan, Victoria and Socorro. A second convoy started from Pinamalyan. The rallyists converged at the gymnasium in Pola town. Protesters carried placards and streamers with slogans calling for the revocation of the permit granted by former DENR Secretary Michael Defensor to Aglubang Mining Corporation in November 2005. Based on the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) signed in December 2000, Aglubang Mining Corporation's operations will cover 2,920 hectares along the Naujan-Victoria boundary, which according to the Tadyawan Mangyan is a watershed area and forms part of their ancestral lands.

Operations of large foreign mining companies cannot but lead to the destruction of Mindoro. The protesters cited the massive floods that struck the island three times last year in quick succession. Also endangered are some 40,000 hectares of ricefields in northern Mindoro.

Anti-Lafayette

Meanwhile, various sectors in Albay and Sorsogon have demanded the shutdown of Lafayette Philippines Inc.'s mining operations after the company twice discharged water with high concentrations of cyanide, mercury and other toxic chemicals into the sea last October. Lafayette's acts have caused a massive fishkill in three barangays in the island town of Rapu-Rapu. PAMALAKAYA and other fisherfolk organizations in the area have likewise called for an immediate end to Lafayette's operations, and moreover said that such incidents prove that liberalization and other unpatriotic policies of the Arroyo regime are detrimental to the basic masses. They also decried the regime's lenient treatment of Lafayette in merely slapping it a ₱10.7 million

fine vis a vis the damage it has caused the environment and the livelihood of fisherfolk in the area.

Anti-mining protest actions in Visayas, Mindanao

Leaders of six large federations of national minorities in Mindanao joined the Indigenous People's Conference on Mining held January 18 to plan their defense of their remaining ancestral lands against large-scale mining. Representatives of ten major tribes in Mindanao likewise attended the conference, which assailed widespread land-grabbing by foreign mining corporations and the damage caused by their operations.

PAMALAKAYA and other fisherfolk organizations in Central Visayas rose up in protest against forthcoming oil exploration activities in the Cebu Strait by a consortium of foreign companies comprising Alcom Gold Resources Corp., Petro Energy Resources Corp., Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp., and AustralAsian Energy Ltd. The protesters said that the project will damage 204,000 hectares of sea and coral reefs inhabited by over 39 species of fish and other marine life. The Cebu Strait also serves as fishing ground for poor fisherfolk from Cebu and Bohol. Six coastal towns in Leyte will also be affected by the exploration.

PAMALAKAYA and other fisherfolk organizations in Negros, Masbate and Bicol plan to file administrative and criminal cases against President Gloria Arroyo and former DENR Secretary Michael Defensor for impending oil and gas exploration activities in Cebu Strait, the destruction caused by Lafayette Philippines Inc, the questionable release by the DENR of thousands of ECCs in 2005 and the commercialization of all coastal areas in the Philippines under the DENR's Administrative Order 24. **AB**

Massacres, political assassinations, forced disappearances

Four progressive leaders were killed in January and February even as a labor leader abducted last December remains missing to date. Militarization continues to intensify and the military's arbitrary killings of suspected NPA supporters are on the rise.

Lucena City Anakpawis coordinator Roberto de la Cruz was shot to death February 1 inside his eatery in the same city by two motorcycle-riding gunmen. That same day, Ricardo Valmocina, 61, his son Roel Joseph, 19, and three other peasants accused as NPA supporters by the military were massacred by 15 armed men in ski masks in Barangay Pinaod, San Ildefonso, Bulacan. The men forced their way into the Valmocina residence at night on the pretext of searching for hidden weapons. They immediately shot and killed the Valmocina farmhands Melchor Cardinal, 24, Michael Malumay, 19, and a certain "Jojo." The armed men then killed Ricardo and Roel Joseph not long after and stole ₱10,000, jewelry and four cellphones belonging to the Valmocinas. They forcibly took with them the Valmocinas' eldest son Renato, 25, and a househelper. The two have not been found to

date and are feared dead. The Valmocina residence is only about 200 meters away from a Philippine Army detachment.

Prior to this, Bayan Muna coordinator and municipal councilor Maximo Frivaldo was killed at around 8:45 a.m. on January 30 in Irosin, Sorsogon. At about 8 a.m. that same day, Bayan Muna organizer Antonio Alde Jr., 25, was shot dead by three men aboard motorcycles without license plates in Barangay Rawis, Borongan. Alde was also an employee at the Eastern Samar provincial capitol.

In Paquibato District, Davao City, community organizer Renato Antonio was murdered by a military death squad on January 18. Antonio, who also chaired the Paquibato-Panabo Motorcycle Operators and Drivers' Association had earlier been accused by the military of ferrying NPA fighters on his motorcycle.

Meanwhile, KARAPATAN-Central Luzon belied military reports that ten NPA fighters were killed in three separate firefights in the uplands of Sta. Ignacia, Tarlac January 31. KARAPATAN said three of those killed were civilians identified as Allan Ibasan, William San-

tos and Dante Salgado, 17. Relatives told KARAPATAN that Ibasan and Salgado were arrested by the military a few hours before the fighting while the two were cutting bamboo in Barangay Villa Aglipay in the adjacent town of San Jose.

In Negros, relatives, friends and supporters organized the Free Perseus Geagoni Movement last January to demand the release from military custody of a National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) officer abducted December 5. Geagoni, who remains missing, was last seen aboard a motorcycle speeding towards the center of Bacolod City while being chased by men aboard two other motorcycles and a van without any license plates.

KARAPATAN said it received reports that Geagoni was abducted by combined elements of the 303rd Brigade, the 11th IB under Lt. Clarence Garrido and the 3rd ID's 87th Military Intelligence Coy under Maj. Ariel Quiatchon. The human rights watchdog also reported that 10 organizers, nine of them from the NFSW and one from the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) have already been killed this year. AB

Tactical offensives in Mindanao

The New People's Army (NPA) launched 136 tactical offensives in 130 days (from September 24, 2005 to January 31, 2006). National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos said Red fighters seized 94 firearms of various caliber in these offensives. Enemy soldiers suffered 99 killed and 87 wounded. In

contrast, the NPA suffered only three defensive actions and lost six high-powered rifles.

Particularly in January, the NPA launched 30 tactical offensives in the island and seized 11 firearms. The military, police and CAFGU suffered 16 killed and 17 wounded.

Most significant of the NPA's armed actions in Mindanao that

month was the raid on a PNP checkpoint along the highway in Barangay Amontay, Marihatag, Surigao del Sur where the NPA seized three M16 rifles, vests and rounds of ammunition. Two policemen were wounded. Earlier, on January 5 and 7, the NPA sniped at two companies of the 39th IB and a company of

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VICTORIOUS NPA OFFENSIVES

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soldiers under the 66th IB conducting military operations in the towns of Columbio, Magsaysay, Tampakan, and Kiblawan in Sultan Kudarat. Four enemy soldiers were killed, including 1Lieutenant Buenaflor of the 66th IB.

Following are other military actions in Mindanao not yet previously reported by AB:

January 30, Barangay Old Bulatukan, Bansalan, Davao del Sur. A team from the NPA's Front Guerrilla Unit 51 kills Sgt. Ernie Garialdo in a sparrow operation.

January 29, Barangay Kioya, Sibagat, Agusan del Sur. Red fighters conduct harassment operations



against elements of the 29th IB conducting RSOT operations, killing a soldier and wounding two others.

January 29, Sityo Mabog, Barangay San Roque, Bislig City. One soldier was killed and five wounded when guerrillas of Front 14 ambushed elements of the CAFGU and 37th IB at about 11:30 a.m.

January 25, Barangay Mapula, Paquibato, Davao City. The 1st Pulang Bagani Company arrest a CAFGU element and two members of the fanatical group Alamara at a checkpoint. Seized from them was a .357 revolver. The prisoners are currently under investigation for rape and multiple murder.

January 22, Barangay Buhisan, San Agustin, Surigao del Sur. Red fighters from Front 19 raid a detachment manned by elements of the 23rd IB-CAFGU, wounding one CAFGU member.

January 17, Barangay Salahon, Salay, Misamis Oriental. Members of the NPA Pequero-Habagat Guerrilla Unit launch a sniping operation on elements of the 8th IB, killing a soldier and wounding two others.

January 15, Barangay UTC, Laac, Compostela Valley. Red fight-

ers from Front 34 launch a sparrow operation, killing a CAFGU element and seizing a .357 revolver.

At 7:00 p.m. that same day, NPA fighters from Front 16 seize a 9 mm pistol from a policeman's nephew who fired his gun on New Year's Eve.

January 14, Barangay Rizal, Monkayo, Compostela Valley. Red fighters under the Pulang Bagani Company harass elements of the 28th IB, wounding two soldiers.

January 12, Barangay Kapatagan, Laac, Compostela Valley. A team from the NPA Main Guerrilla Unit 33 launch a sparrow operation, killing a barangay councilman who served as an enemy informer.

January 6, Barangay Nuevo Gracia, Loreto, Agusan del Sur. Red fighters from Front 34 snipe 28th IB troops, killing a soldier.

January 4, Baganga, Davao Oriental. An Armed Propaganda Unit from Front 15 seizes a carbine from an abusive businessman.

January 1, Barangay Patil, Kapalong, Davao del Norte. A team from the NPA's Front 34 launches a sparrow operation, killing a CAFGU element and wounding a member of the fanatical group Alamara. AB

Raid and ambush in Surigao del Sur

THE NPA seized 24 firearms in a raid on the municipal police station in Lingig, Surigao del Sur at 3 p.m. of February 5 without firing a single shot. Meantime, eight enemy soldiers were killed and seven others wounded the next day when the NPA ambushed arriving enemy reinforcements in Barangay Kauswagan of the same town.

The raid launched by the Conrado Heredia Command (CHC)-Front 20 lasted for only 20 minutes. Seized were three M203s, ten M16s, a 12-gauge shotgun, four

.45 pistols, a 9 mm pistol, three .38 revolvers and two .357 pistols. Also seized were rounds of ammunition and other military paraphernalia.

Before the raid, the AFP and PNP had ordered troops from the 36th IB to reinforce the police forces at the Lingig municipal hall. The military reinforcements were among those disarmed during the raid.

In a statement, the Merardo Arce Command (NPA-Southern Mindanao) said that the Lingig raid

was the seventh disarming operation launched against the various PNP municipal headquarters in the region and nearby towns. The NPA seized enough weapons from these military actions to arm a new company of Red fighters.

Meanwhile, the NPA in Southern Mindanao also reported that an armored personnel carrier (APC) and a six-wheeler truck were total wrecks after being hit by command-detonated land mines in the CHC's ambush February 6 against reinforcements from the 36th IB. AB

Top RPA leader punished in Negros

New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas ambushed and killed a top commander of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) and two elements of the paramilitary Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO) in the town center of Mabinay, Negros Oriental in the afternoon of January 26. Killed was Rogelio Mambato (alias Malvar), who was waylaid by two NPA partisans in front of his house.

The two CVO elements were killed when they attempted to help Mambato after hearing shots from their post 500 meters away. They were intercepted and killed by other guerrillas who were on the lookout for enemy reinforcements.

Mambato was a well-known NPA commander in Southern Negros before he joined the counterrevolutionary bandit group led by Arturo Tabara and Stephen Paduano (alias "Carapali Lualhati"). He supervised RPA-ABB operations in Negros island which collaborated with the military and police in antipeople suppression campaigns.

Even before the signing of a formal ceasefire agreement between the government and the RPA-ABB, the latter had already gained notoriety for its banditry and for serving as bodyguard to big landlord-compradors and local politicians like Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, the brothers Mike and Iggy Arroyo, and Gov. George Arnaiz. The RPA-ABB colluded with the 303rd Bde and PNP-Negros in beating up, raping, extorting and stealing from, abducting and summarily executing members and leaders of open democratic and patriotic organizations and suspected sympathizers of the revolutionary movement.

AB

Tragedy at the Philsport arena

The Communist Party of the Philippines extended its heartfelt condolences to the victims of the tragedy at the Philsport Arena in Pasig (formerly known as the Ultra sports stadium) that occurred morning of February 4.

Seventy-four people were killed and 700 others were wounded in a stampede as thousands waited in line to attend the first anniversary celebration of the ABS-CBN-produced television program "Wowowee". A few days before the event, up to 50,000 people had already camped out and lined up at the gates in the hope of winning various prizes amounting to several millions of pesos at the show. They were driven by the show's promise that "No one will go home disappointed, no one will go home without a prize." Thus, they patiently lined up and waited for several days, only to meet with tragedy.

The victims were from the toiling masses, most of them mothers and their children. It was desperation in the face of intense poverty that lay at the root of the Philsport tragedy. The tragic event was a testament to the Filipino masses' desperation to escape their wretchedness that has clearly worsened in the past five years of the US-Arroyo regime's rule. It put the lie to Arroyo's grandiose claims that all was fine with the Philippine economy.

The Philsport tragedy is part of the much bigger tragedy suffered by the Filipino people due to the corrupt ruling social system and Arroyo's exceeding rapacity. This is the greater tragedy—of widespread unemployment, unbearable tax burdens, high prices of commodities, decaying social services and others that are daily and slowly snuffing the lives of the poor.

AB

Hamas not bowing down to US, EU pressure

The Hamas party received the majority vote in recent parliamentary elections in Palestine on January 5, ending the Fatah party's 40-year domination over the Palestinians' political life. After its victory, the Hamas party promised not to bow down to pressures and threats from the US and Israeli governments. Hamas said that the Palestinian people are clearly determined to form a new government, a decision that should be respected by all political parties.

This statement was issued in reaction to intense pressure by the US and its allies for Hamas to stop the armed struggle against Israel. The Bush government has threatened to stop financial aid to the Palestinian Authority should Hamas refuse to lay down its arms. The European Union (EU) has also been forcing Hamas to abandon armed struggle and recognize the state of Israel and has threatened to cut off aid which accounts for almost half of the Palestinian Authority's budget. The Palestinian Authority receives

about \$1 billion annually in external aid—\$615 million from the EU and from \$70 to \$150 million from the US. Israel, meanwhile, has reneged on its promise last January to pay the Palestinian Authority \$45 million in taxes and tariffs for Israeli products entering Palestine. It has announced that it would stop all payments starting February

should Hamas refuse to bow down to its demands.

With preparations underway for the establishment of a Legislative Council in the Palestinian Authority on February 16, Hamas has formed a delegation that has traveled to various Arab countries to gather broader support. Saudi Arabia has promised to provide \$20

million while Qatar has pledged \$13 million in financial aid to Hamas. The Hamas delegation also plans to visit Latin American countries like Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia, which, through various means and in varying degrees have dared to resist the dictates of the US' imperialist government. AB